Panel Third to Probe Mob Links

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Jeff Jury Hears Cronvich

By ROSEMARY JAMES

Sheriff Alwynn J. Cronvich appeared before the Jefferson Parish grand jury today as the jury joined its counterparts in Orleans and East Baton Rouge parishes in probing organized crime.

Subpenaed for today's session were Parish President Thomas F. Donelon; his aide, Merlin Hudson; Joe Johnson, a contractor; Col. Thomas Burbank, superintendent of the State Police, and Aaron Kohn, managing director of the Metropolitan Crime Commission.

—States-Item photo.

AARON KOHN, left, managing director of the Metropolitan Crime Commission, talks with Jefferson Parish President THOMAS F. DONELON outside the Jefferson Parish Grand Jury room in Gretna.

Charles Ray Ward, first assistant district attorney of Orleans Parish, was subpenaed to appear today. However, when he was called he had not shown up.

However, it was reported that Ward would appear later today.

Sheriff Cronvich appeared voluntarily, without a subpena. He entered the jury room about 11 a. m. and was still there at noon. He was the first to be called.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY Frank H. Langridge, asked about the probe, said, "It is in connection with organized crime. Don't ask me anything else."

Langridge said later, "it is my opinion that there is no organized crime in Jefferson Parish. However, other people say there is organized crime. I want to settle this question once and for all for my own satisfaction and for the benefit of the people of Jefferson —is there or isn't there organized crime? So I have asked the grand jury to investigate this question."

Langridge had previously announced his intention of investigating charges by Life magazine that organized crime is rife in Louisiana, especially in Jefferson.

District Attorneys Jim Garrison of Orleans and Sargent Pitcher of East Baton Rouge are conducting separate probes of the same charges. Garrison contends the charges are false.

Before entering the jury room, Cronvich said he was invited "to discuss the functions of my office." Langridge and Cronvich are bitter political foes. Cronvich was mentioned favorably in the Life articles, Langridge unfavorably.

—States-Item Photo.

JEFF SHERIFF ALWYNN J. CRONVICH Jury witness.

WAITING TO BE called, Johnson said he had no idea why he was subpenaed. His name has not prevoiusly come up in the discussion.

Donelon, Burbank and Kohn said they assumed their subpenas were in connection with the crime probe, but were not told this officially.

Burbank and Kohn previously testified in the Orleans probe. Donelon is a political ally of Cronvich, and both are involved in reelection campaigns.

Of his subpena, Kohn said:

"I'M ASSUMING IT is in connection with organized crime. Actually, I don't know. I have no idea what they are going to ask."

The MCC and Kohn supplied Life with some of the information used in its articles.

Kohn said, "We believe we have information which could be helpful to the grand jury members if they are serious in their intention to investigate organized crime ele-

—States-Item photo.

DA FRANK H. LANGRIDGE leaves the Jefferson Parish Grand Jury room during this morning's session.

ments.

"We are hopeful that the attitude here in Jefferson will be more constructive than what we found at the hands of Garrison's staff in Orleans."

Sheriff Cronvich said after coming out of the grand jury

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that his appearance was not significant, that he was merely invited before the grand jury to explain to them the functions of his office as they relate to the grand jury.

"YOU MIGHT call it an educational session for the grand jury," he said.

Cronvich said, however, that he did want to get a clear understanding of what Langridge means when he uses the term "organized crime." He said he wants to get the definition straight.

Kohn, who was standing nearby, said that he feels that a clear understanding of the meaning of organized crime is a key issue in such grand jury investigation.

COL. BURBANK, who was the second man before the jury, said when he came out that the jury had talked to him generally about the organized crime probe by various grand juries throughout the state.

He said that he feels "there should be a united effort by local people — local grand juries—to see that they do not have organized crime or unpunished crimes of any sort in their areas."

He said that the local grand jury will be concerning itself with problems limited to Jefferson Parish.

COL. BURBANK also discussed the meaning of organized crime as he sees it. He said "I don't think we have a situation where one man or maybe two men control everything in the whole state. I do think there are some people operating in criminal activity who are more powerful than others."

Burbank said that the state police "always are ready to cooperate with local grand juries in such investigations." But he said, that he believes there is "really no need for the help of state police if local elected officials and police officers are really doing their job."